

The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle.

OLD MILES IN THORSDEAN

In the picturesque village of Thorsdean, nestled amidst rolling hills and meandering streams, there once lived a man named Miles. Known affectionately as "Miles o' David's," he resided in a modest shanty near the riverside, just below the gentle slope of "Broad Bonk." Miles was a well-known figure in the local community, and his uncle, "Will i'th' Parlour," resided in nearby Trawden.

Miles was the proprietor of a cozy establishment known as a "whist shop," a term used in East Lancashire to describe a small pub. In addition to running his establishment, Miles took pride in brewing his own beer, which he sold under the old Act by subscribing to Her Majesty's exchequer. He was known for his sharp wit, abundant humor, and his knack for engaging customers with his jovial banter. Miles truly embodied the spirit of a genial host, and his patrons often found themselves leaving his establishment as they arrived—sober and content.

The location of Miles's shanty by the riverside was fortuitous, as the water flowing nearby was pristine and abundant. Perhaps it was the purity of this water or the scarcity of malt that prevented his patrons from succumbing to the excesses of drunkenness, but whatever the reason, Miles's establishment was blessedly spared from the brawls and disturbances that plagued other drinking establishments. This further endeared him to the village folk and garnered him a loyal following.

Miles's charm and hospitality also extended beyond his regular customers. During the sporting season, the moors surrounding Thorsdean would attract gentlemen sportsmen from far and wide. Among them was the venerable General Scarlett, a well-respected figure who often frequented the area. The General and his fellow sportsmen would occasionally seek respite at Miles's whist shop, partaking in the refreshments Miles had to offer.

One vivid memory stands out—a day when the weary shooters returned from a particularly arduous day of sport. General Scarlett, astride his horse, rode up to Miles's shanty and greeted him warmly. "Well, Miles, how are you? We have a group of gentlemen here eager to savor your renowned beer," the General declared with a smile. Ever the obliging host, Miles wasted no time in serving the beer, filling common earthenware pots to the brim. The group of sportsmen settled on the small patch of greensward in front of Miles's door, reveling in the camaraderie, the libations, and the sheer joy of the moment.

Alas, time has a way of transforming even the most cherished memories. Miles has long since departed from this world, leaving behind his legacy in the hearts of those who knew him. The valiant General Scarlett, too, has found his eternal rest in the quiet churchyard of Holmes Chapel.

As for the humble riverside shanty that was once abuzz with the merry chorus of Miles's patrons, it now lies in ruins, devoid of a roof and ailing under the weight of neglect—a poignant reminder of a bygone era.

But while Miles and his shanty may be gone, their memory lingers in the hearts of Thorsdean's inhabitants. The stories of laughter and camaraderie, of refreshing ale shared on sunlit afternoons, continue to be passed down from one generation to the next. And as the village evolves and new faces grace its streets, the spirit of Miles and the cherished times he provided remain woven into the tapestry of Thorsdean's history—a testament to the enduring power of good company and the magic that can be found within the humblest of establishments.

By Donald Jay